

Recent Findings from the SCD Lab at Yale

Investigating How Children Understand the Social World

Spring 2015



Understanding children's social reasoning

We are a developmental psychology lab at Yale, focusing on how children construct an understanding of the social world and especially how they understand other people. We set up games and surveys that give us insight into topics like the development of fairness, friendship, and group affiliation and work with children between the ages of 3 and 12.

This newsletter summarizes a few recent projects. If you would be interested in having your child participate in studies at our lab, please fill out an information sheet at our booth so we can get in contact.

Feel free to contact us with any questions!



In the preferences study, one puppet has the same preferences as the child and the other puppet does not. Who do children prefer?

Groups and Fairness

Do children take team membership into account when assessing fairness? We gave 6- to 10-year-old children "tokens" that could be traded for small prizes. Children were assigned to either a red or blue "team" and then decided how many of 10 tokens they wanted to share with an anonymous classmate. The other child then responded to that offer by accepting it or rejecting it. If it was rejected the tokens were lost to both children. Thus, to be successful children had to anticipate the decisions that their peers would make. Results showed that older children made fairer offers (closer to 50/50) and that all children were more likely to accept fair offers. Team membership did not affect rates of acceptance or rejection, suggesting that children think of fairness as universally enforceable regardless of group membership.

Shared and Non-shared preferences

How do young children (ages 3-6) reason about others who share or don't share their preferences, or who share some and don't share others? We determined children's preferences based on their ratings of different foods, and introduced them to puppets that expressed the same or different opinions about the foods. We then asked children to make judgments about these puppets, such as which puppet's favorite food they would rather eat and which puppet's favorite toy they would rather play with. Results showed that children considered shared likes as more important than shared dislikes and that they preferred the puppet that shared their preferences. Our findings suggest that children make surprisingly sophisticated judgments about others based on shared and non-shared social preferences.

Want to help with current studies?
Fill out an information form!